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Woman's Board of Missions,
I CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE, BOSTON.

Village Schools, No. I.

BY

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LEAFLET No. 9,

ISSUED BY COMMITTEE ON JUNIOR WORK.

VILLAGE SCHOOLS IN TURKEY.

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MARSOVAN.

WITHIN the last quarter century a vast system of common schools has been developed in the Turkish Empire. From these have come forth, in the main, the high schools and colleges. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the great procuring cause of this remarkable educational movement, hitherto, has been evangelism. The preaching of the gospel, the publication of the Scriptures in the tongues of the people, the issue of religious books and periodicals, have stirred up inquiry and set the land agog, especially in regard to desire for knowledge.

The Evangelicals have signally led in this movement, and they were first *led by* the gospel, in this direction, as they are still. The significance of all this is such as may well attract the earnest attention of American Christians, and enlist their deepest sympathy.

The fact that evangelical truth is the prime mover and chief promoter of anything so great as a whole school system, is a weighty one; but

the fact that the same truth has the opportunity to be the molder and controller of the system is a weightier one.

The evangelical colleges in the Empire easily take their place as the leading educational institutions of the land. The same may be said of the evangelical seminaries for girls, and high schools for boys, as far as solid and symmetrical training is concerned.

The question arises, How is it with the common and village schools? Has the evangelical influence the same advantage here? I should say, Yes, so far as it goes. It is not so extended as it ought to be, nor is the full amount of attention required given to this part of the work. It is of consequence that we build walls as well as towers. Good colleges and good high schools will not long be possible unless there is an extended and excellent system of common schools for them to rest upon. No system of evangelism or of education is sound which does not contemplate reaching the whole population. And let me say here that, in our part of the missionary world at least, evangelical education is so identified with the preaching of the gospel that no line of distinction can be drawn between the two.

The subject of the village schools, then, rises before us in all its importance. In these schools are found, at the most impressionable age, the young minds which are to control thought and character thirty years hence. To whom shall such a work as this be committed? Who

guides here, guides almost all. Here is the watershed that turns the streams to either sea.

In such a country a really capable teacher—man or woman—is a person of great weight in the village, not to say in the cities also. He or she is the learned, the wise one, the *personage* of the community, the authority in science, the counselor in doubt, the referee in difficulty. In places where no regular preacher can be supported—and there are many such—the discreet and sensible teacher becomes the spiritual and intellectual leader of the people—the pastor. In not a few instances women have attained to this degree of influence.

And what a fountain of influence a village may be! I could point to more than one such place that has developed a dozen or a score of leading personages in the evangelical ranks.

The better development of the village school system is a work which the Woman's Boards may well lay hold of with all the enthusiasm which marks their operations. There is a large sense in which a Woman's Board may become the mother of a rising generation in a distant land.

Ladies in the Central Turkey Mission have acted as superintendents of the common schools in the field. They could hardly do better work. If there is any branch of the work which at the present time needs special thought, and care, and prayer, it is the planting and guiding of such schools. They must be thoroughly visited and kept toned up; inefficient teachers must

be weeded out. The importance of the work ought to be magnified. Various means and measures should be instituted for *enthusing* the teachers and the pupils, for there is nothing duller than a school without enthusiasm.

There are difficulties to be overcome. One of them is the desirableness of adhering to the policy of self-support. To establish *free* schools is to insure non-success, according to our idea of success. We wish to plant institutions, not in pots, but in the soil, where they shall not need indefinite foreign irrigation to make them grow. The poverty of the people is such as to make this difficult, but the difficulty can be largely overcome by increase of spirit and numbers. The spirit of self-sacrificing love will accomplish almost anything, anywhere.

It is time this subject was made prominent. Let the young people undertake to bring it forward and prosecute it.

The Committee on Junior Work proposes to issue a series of leaflets on the village schools of different countries.

Articles containing interesting information on this subject may also be found in

Missionary Herald	August, 1889.
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